

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday Oct. 18, 2020. "Now What? Who rode with you?"

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to watch the service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk.

Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it. We're still gathering in person. A growing but dedicated group who follow all the guidelines and were so encouraging with your love and presence gathered with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We still are your church family and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

II Recap.

At the beginning of October we began this series; "**Now what?**", as a conversation about this pandemic we find ourselves in. We didn't plan for this, see it coming, and many of us are still trying to figure out how to navigate this bizarre new world. And the question; "**now what?**" is us admitting we've come to the end of ourselves. We're ready to let go of any assumptions that have been blown apart by this. And we don't want to just survive. We want to make the most out of our lives as possible. And also have some control over what our future will look like.

The first Sunday we talked about the importance and benefit of learning from honestly reflected upon experience. In these really odd times, if we can look back and see what fed us and what drained us, we can see what we need specifically to get through this. The second Sunday we talked about the importance of growing the skill of practicing gratitude. We're being reminded we have little control over the circumstances around us, but we can control how we react in these difficult times. And there are a few practices we can incorporate into our lives that will grow gratitude and give us a solid place to stand in the midst of everything that's swirling around us. All that content is available for you.

III Sunday.

Sunday we hit the third question in our "**now what?**" series, and we asked; "**who rode with you?**" In this time of dealing with everything going on around us, who could you depend on to help you thrive? We know the importance of having a solid, supportive circle of people in our lives. There's very little replacement for the benefit of people who are for us. Especially during this pandemic, we have to be wise and intentional about how we both choose our friends, and how we spend time with them. Do this well, and these times are easier to navigate. Don't have solid dependable people in your life, and you're going to find yourself going to some tough places.

Where have friendships helped you during the past year?

Where have relationships possibly disappointed you during the past year?

What struggles have you had maintaining supportive, nurturing relationships this past year?

There were two passages of scripture used that gave us insight about the importance of relationships, and as an example of an epic friendship that helped two people get through their own really tough times. So, we'll read those two scriptures and then unpack them a bit. Read **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**.

And then **1 Samuel 18:1-4**.

What jumped out to you about each passage?

What did they say about the significance and importance of good relationships?

What would that mean especially now in the middle of this pandemic?

Kal said there are four things we should have in common with people we choose to ride with. They were pulled from the story of Jonathan and David, and an understanding in Ecclesiastes that talks about what makes relationships stronger. These values "*knit our souls together*" as the NIV described Jonathan and David's relationship, and make that cord of three strands.

1. Common covenant.

There is something that holds us together more than just similarities, or affinity for the same things. There is a **bond of relationship that is built around a center**, (God), about what you can give out of love, rather than what you can get. Desire for your growth is as strong as for their own. So there is this bond that's based on having a relationship moving each other in the same direction. You've GOT them and they've GOT you. You are FOR each other. Neither David nor Jonathan had this with their own siblings or family. There was something spiritual, bigger than just blood, that grew this bond.

When you choose who rides with you, make sure they're willing to make the same covenant to you that you make with them.

2. Common cause.

This is when two hearts beat for the **same** purpose. You may be different in a multitude of ways, but you're working in the **same** direction. You have the **same** vision, passion, desire to see the same things happen. Have you ever met that person you just clicked with because you had the same values? You constantly say; "*same here!*" The **same** things that inspire and light you up do that for them. And this isn't the 'mutual admiration society'. You're not afraid to say, in love, the hard things to each other. You're just working towards the same goals.

When you choose who rides with you, make sure you're both working on the same cause.

3. Common commitment.

Jonathan took off his tunic, sword, bow and belt and gave it to David. A common commitment means that person is committed to the same goals, and therefore the same process you are. You have the same hopes, dreams, desire the same future, and you're willing to put the same amount of work into it. This is both of you willing to put in equal effort for something bigger, and are also willing to do the work. This is what we know we have at NCC. We're all so beautifully different, but we all want the same thing for this church. God to be honored, every person to feel welcome, encourage them towards an active life-giving relationship with God, and radically loving others. In our diversity and individual uniqueness, we're all committed to the same thing.

When you choose people to ride with you, make sure they have the same level of commitment to dedication and work that you do.

4. Common calling.

“One in the spirit” is what the NIV calls *“knit souls together”*. Desire for this bigger thing that lets you know it’s not about them. Our lives are pointed in the same direction. Meaning we work side by side, all working in and towards the same things. All through scripture we have this constant promise- *“I will put my spirit in you”*. Whatever you don’t feel like you have, short of, can’t muster on your own, ask for it. Spirit isn’t trying your hardest to make all of these happen. That’s religion. Spirit is realizing you’re not able to do all of these on your own, and surrendering your life over to the work of God.
When you choose who you will ride with make sure they have a bigger/higher calling in life then just themselves.

All of these and each of these are what makes a cord three strands strong and knits souls together.

III Challenge.

There is no way we can overplay the importance of having the right people in our lives. People who are for us, and who are willing to make significant commitments to something bigger than themselves, align their purpose with something that matters, help and encourage you on your journey, and hang in there no matter what.

So, no real answerable questions, but just some honest reflection.

Do you have people in your life who meet these four common needs?

Name, to yourself, the people who are not moving you in a better direction?

Name, again to yourself, the people who are moving you in a better direction?

What are the things you need to do to make this better?

It’s in surrounding ourselves, our inner circle, with people who want the same things out of life that you do, that will help you through this pandemic.